WHITEY'S SUNDAY HORSE

Story and Pictures by Glen Rounds

A Story Parade PICTURE BOOK

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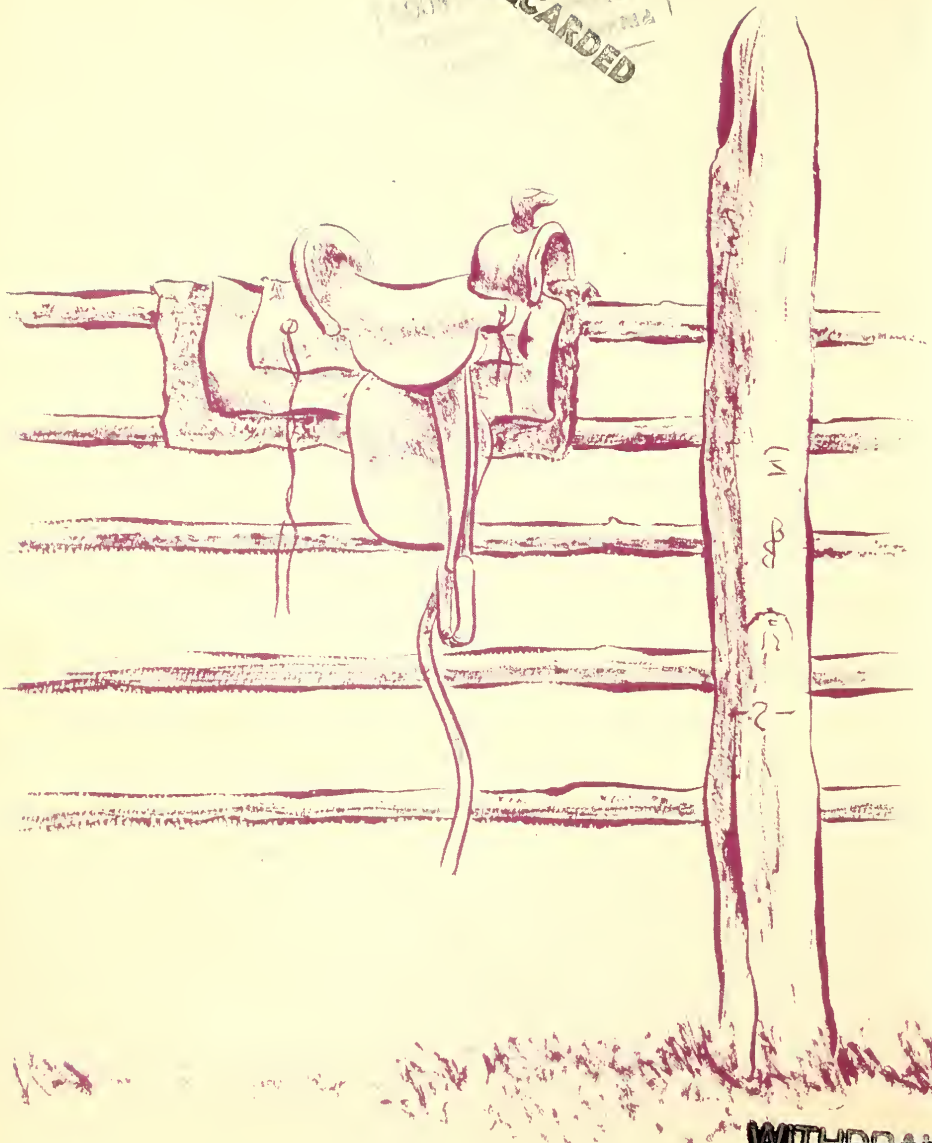

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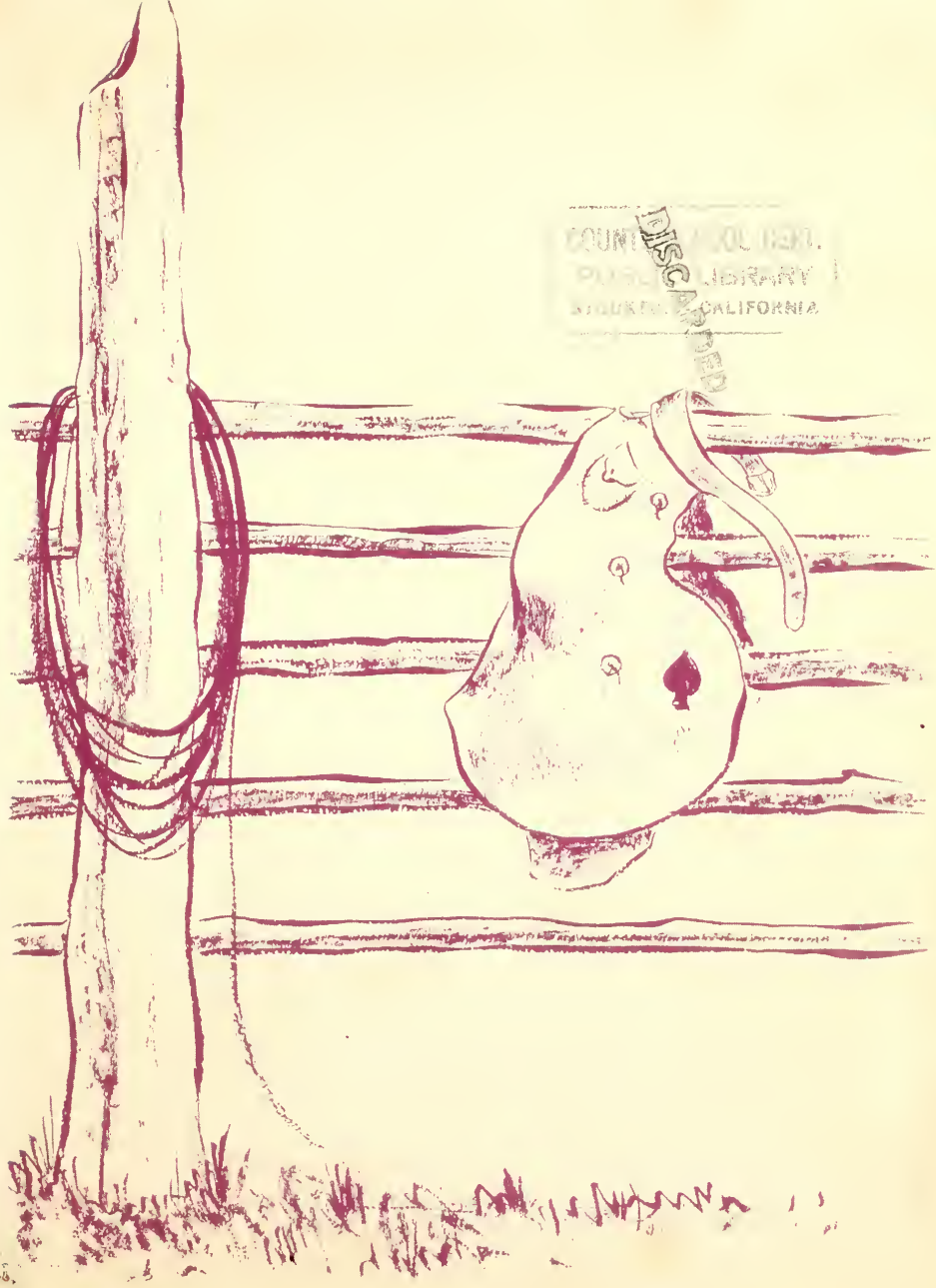

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WHITEY'S SUNDAY HORSE

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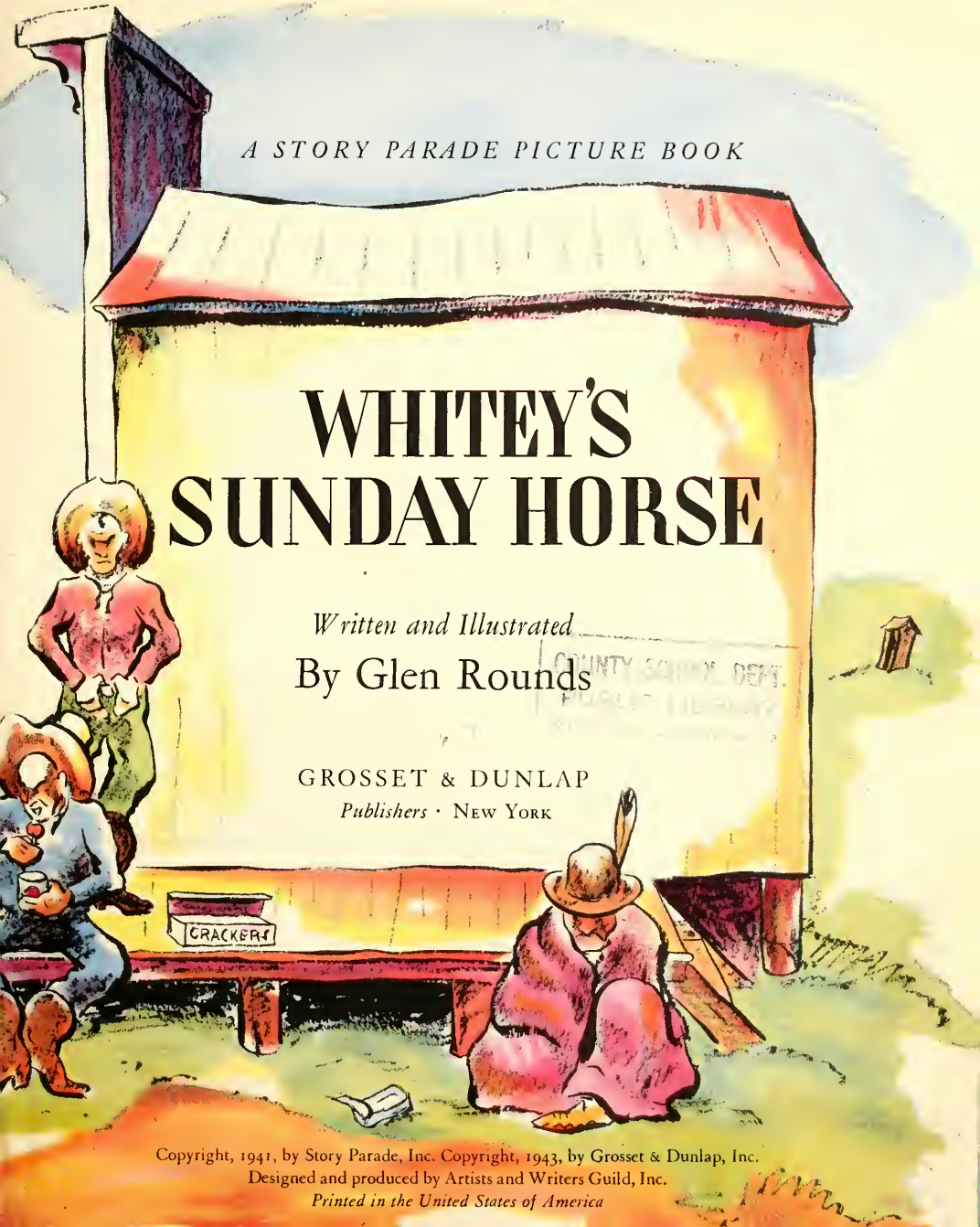

A STORY PARADE PICTURE BOOK

WHITEY'S SUNDAY HORSE

Written and Illustrated

By Glen Rounds

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UNCLE TORWAL and Whitey were out to see how their range stock was getting along. Torwal was a slow-speaking fellow with a droopy red mustache, and a good many of the horses running in the Badlands belonged to him. Whitey, who was probably ten years old or thereabouts, had lived with him on the ranch for several years, almost since he could remember. He wore a cast-off Stetson hat of Torwal's and high-heeled riding boots from the same source. They lived alone like any two old sourdoughs and were a familiar sight at all the round-ups and in town of a Saturday, Torwal on a crop-eared black and Whitey on a pot-bellied old pinto named Spot. Torwal usually spoke of Whitey as his "sawed-off" foreman.

On this day, as they rode along, they came on something that interested them both. In a grassy hollow at the head of a dry coulee they saw a little brown mustang mare and a brand new colt. The colt was an awkward-looking scamp as he stood with his trembling legs braced wide apart, catching his breath after the effort of getting up. His body was close knit and compact, and his back was strong and flat, but his legs were so long and slender he appeared to be walking on stilts.

The mare whirled to face them, keeping the colt behind her. With her teeth bared and her ears laid back, she looked half wolf for sure.

"Spunky critter, that mare," Whitey said to Torwal as they rode carefully around, trying to get a good look at the colt.

"She's a wolf, all right," Torwal agreed. "Better not crowd her. She'd just as soon paste you outa your saddle as not, the way she's feeling now."

They sat on their horses and admired the colt. "Do you reckon we better take him home," asked Whitey, "so the wolves won't get him?"

"Don't reckon we'll take him anywhere," Torwal said. "Looks like I'm a-going to have to shoot him!"

"Shoot him! Why?" squalled Whitey. "Why he's the purtiest colt on the ranch!"

"Better look him over closer, Bub," said Torwal. "See if you notice anything outa the way about him."

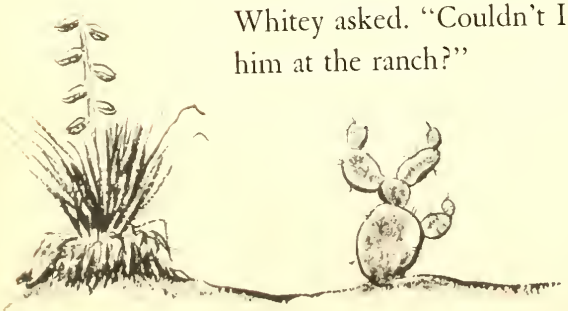
"I don't see anything wrong, myself," Whitey told him, after he'd walked Spot in a circle around the mare and colt again. "He looks to me just like the kind of critter I'd like to have for a 'Sunday' horse."

"Look at his eyes! They're white," Torwal growled. "That colt's blind as a bat!"

"Aw, they're just china eyes, Uncle Torwal," Whitey said. "Lots of horses have china eyes. Even Old Spot has one."

"They're not china eyes, not by a long shot," said Torwal. "If you look close you'll see that they're pure white. He's blind, and we gotta shoot him. Otherwise he'll fall in a hole somewhere or get wolf et."

"Well, even if he is blind do we *hafta* shoot him?" Whitey asked. "Couldn't I take him home and keep him at the ranch?"



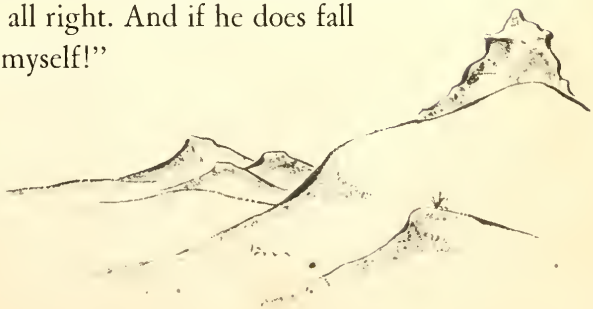
"All he'd be is a mess of trouble even if you got him home, and I doubt that he'd get that far," Torwal told him.

"Well, anyway, do we hafta shoot him?" Whitey said. "Couldn't we just let him go loose?"

"Now quit your squalling," Torwal told him patiently. "I don't like it any more than you do, but if we leave him he'll either fall in a hole and starve or else he'll get wolf et."

While Whitey sat with his lip hanging down almost to his collar, Torwal took another chew from his plug and got his rifle out of his saddle scabbard. But whenever he tried to get near the colt the little mare was there, lashing out with her heels and baring her teeth to bite either man or horse that got too near.

After this had gone on a little while, Whitey spoke up again. "Listen, Uncle Torwal," he said, "I don't believe any wolf could get to that colt, the way the mare uses her heels. If you'll let him go, I'll watch mighty close to see if he falls in anything. I'll ride out every day to see that he's all right. And if he does fall in I—I—I'll shoot him myself!"



Uncle Torwal thought the matter over a while. "You want that colt mighty bad, don't you?" he said at last.

"I sure do! He's the purtiest thing I've ever seen!" said Whitey. "I don't think anything will happen to him, really, Uncle Torwal! He's too smart!"

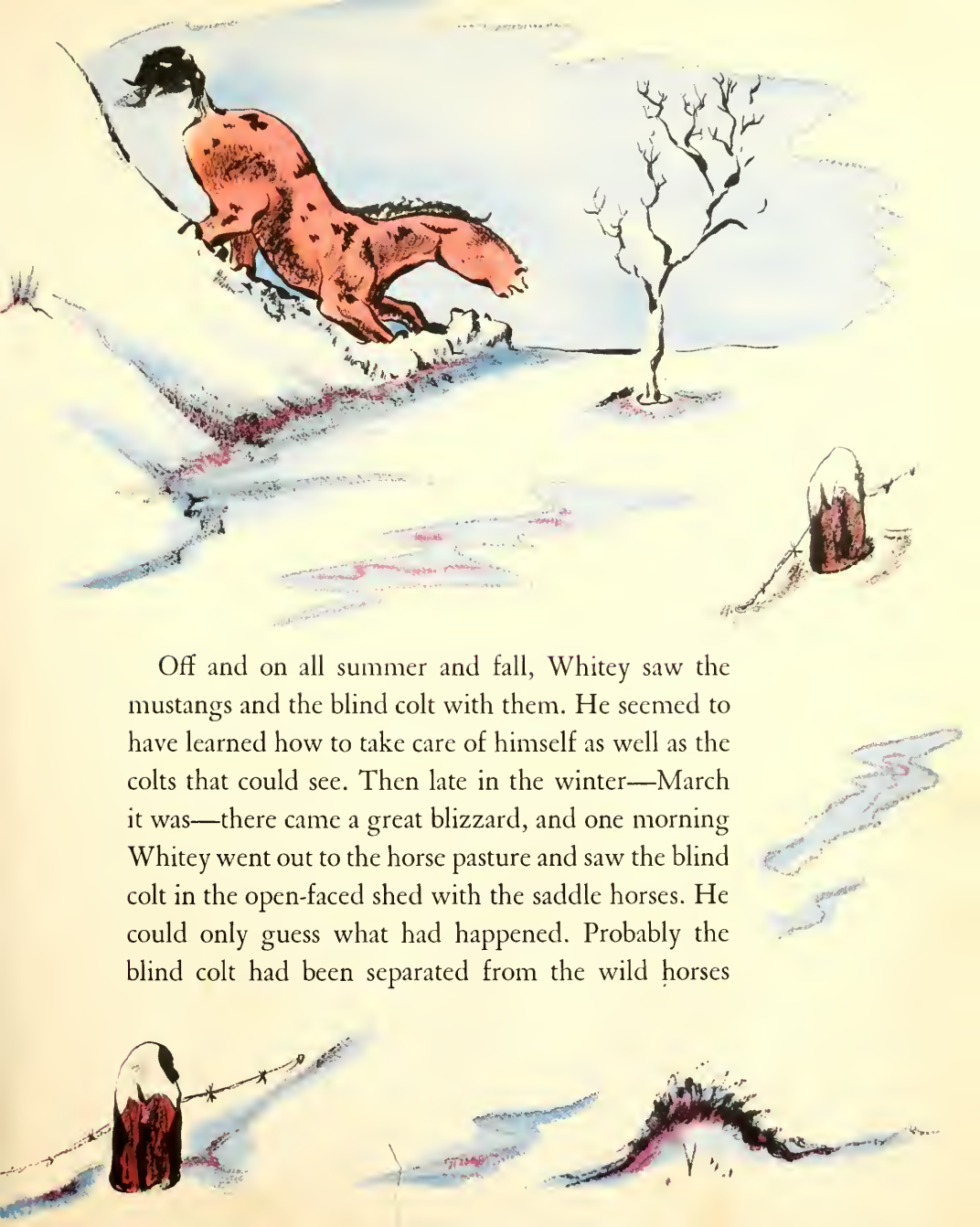
"Well," Torwal said doubtfully, "since you feel like that about it, we'll let him go this time. We'll be riding over here every day for a while, so we can always shoot him later.

"But don't go getting your hopes up," he added. "The chances are he won't last a week."

"Nothing is going to happen to him," Whitey exclaimed. "You'll see."

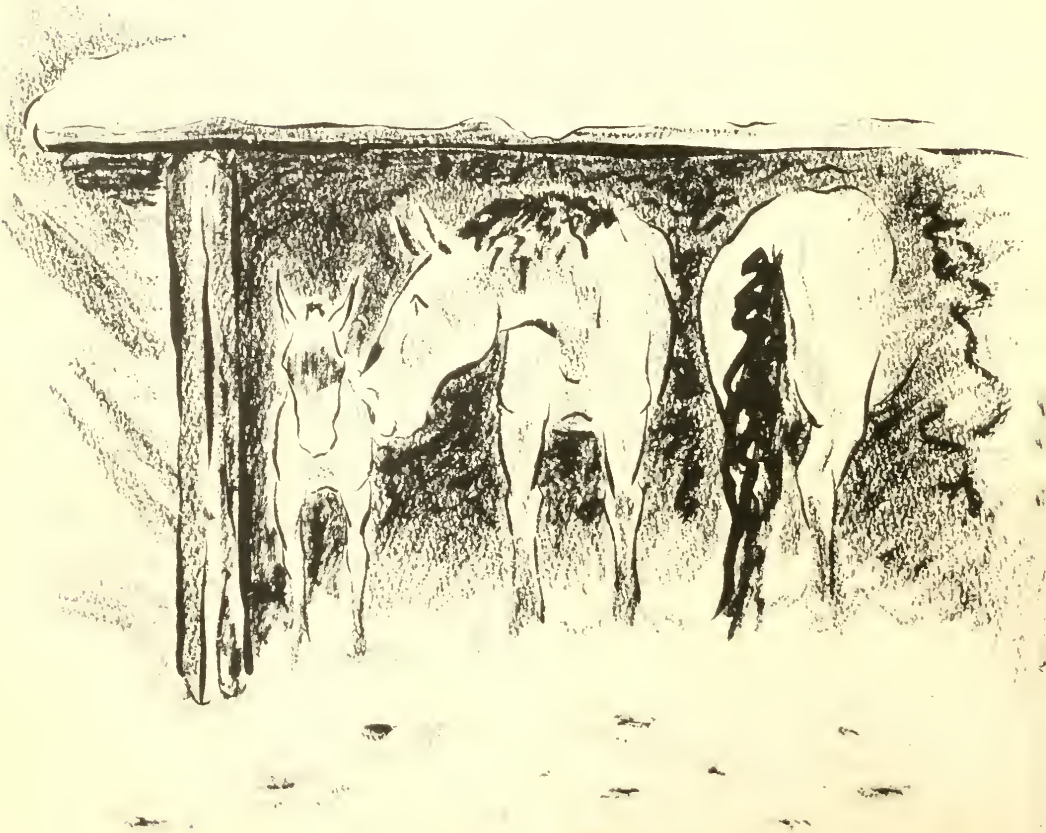
"Maybe," said Uncle Torwal, but Whitey could see that he was glad to have an excuse for not shooting the colt. They sat watching a while, then rode off.

The little mare stood guard until they were out of sight. When she could no longer hear them, she started down the trail toward the place where she'd left the mustang band, with the blind colt following close against her flank.



Off and on all summer and fall, Whitey saw the mustangs and the blind colt with them. He seemed to have learned how to take care of himself as well as the colts that could see. Then late in the winter—March it was—there came a great blizzard, and one morning Whitey went out to the horse pasture and saw the blind colt in the open-faced shed with the saddle horses. He could only guess what had happened. Probably the blind colt had been separated from the wild horses

as they drifted ahead of the storm and had stumbled on until he found shelter. Ordinarily, the ranch horses would have chased him out because he was strange to them, but old pot-bellied Spot took a fancy to the lost and lonely youngster, as old horses will sometimes do, and let him have a place between him and the wall of the shed.



The next morning, when Whitey came wading across the pasture, he found the horses standing around the stockyard fence waiting for him to throw them some hay.

Whitey's excitement can be imagined, when he saw Spot come trotting up with the blind colt following a safe distance behind, snorting softly and cocking his ears forward and back. The boy rubbed Spot's head and talked softly to the colt which stood some distance off. Spot seemed to be as proud of the colt as if he'd foaled it himself. Confusion, the dog, sat on the snow with his tongue hanging out and didn't express an opinion.

Whitey didn't mean to let Uncle Torwal find out that the blind colt was there if he could help it. He might start talking about shooting the poor blind critter.

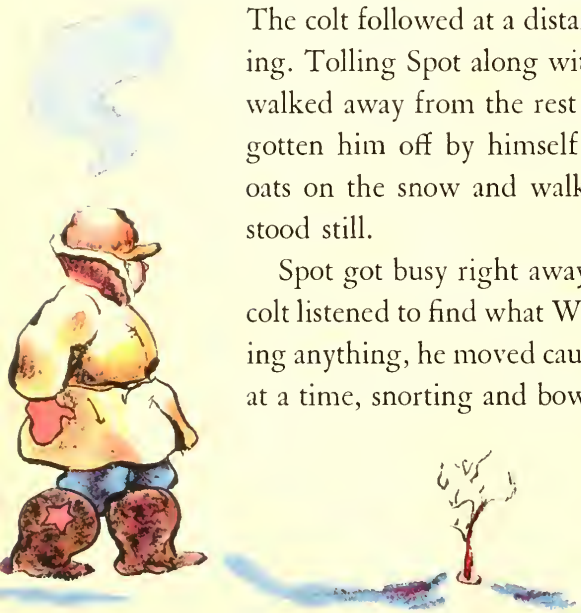
Whitey thought the matter over as he threw hay over the fence and scattered it out on the snow. Now that the horses were out in the open again, they remembered that the colt was a stranger and chased him away from the hay when they could. But always he came

back to where Old Spot was and when he learned to keep his distance from the others he had little trouble.

After he'd thrown the hay out, Whitey hung around as long as he dared, admiring the colt and trying to think of a way he could keep him without Uncle Torwal finding out about it. But after a while he had to leave for fear Torwal would get to wondering what had happened to him and come out to look.

That afternoon he came back again. He still didn't have a plan, but he brought a pan of oats. When he rattled them in the pan, Spot threw up his head and came trotting up. He knew what the sound meant. The colt followed at a distance as he had in the morning. Tolling Spot along with the pan of oats, Whitey walked away from the rest of the horses. When he'd gotten him off by himself he scattered some of the oats on the snow and walked off some distance and stood still.

Spot got busy right away eating the oats while the colt listened to find what Whitey was doing. Not hearing anything, he moved cautiously forward a few steps at a time, snorting and bowing his neck. By the time



he got to where Spot was, most of the oats were gone, but he did manage to get a taste.

When Spot finished, Whitey rattled the pan again, and poured out some more oats on the snow where he stood. Spot trotted to him while the colt whirled away, only to come slowly back as Whitey stood still. He repeated the performance several times that afternoon and the first thing next morning he was back again. He was trying to teach the colt to come to the rattle of the oats pan.

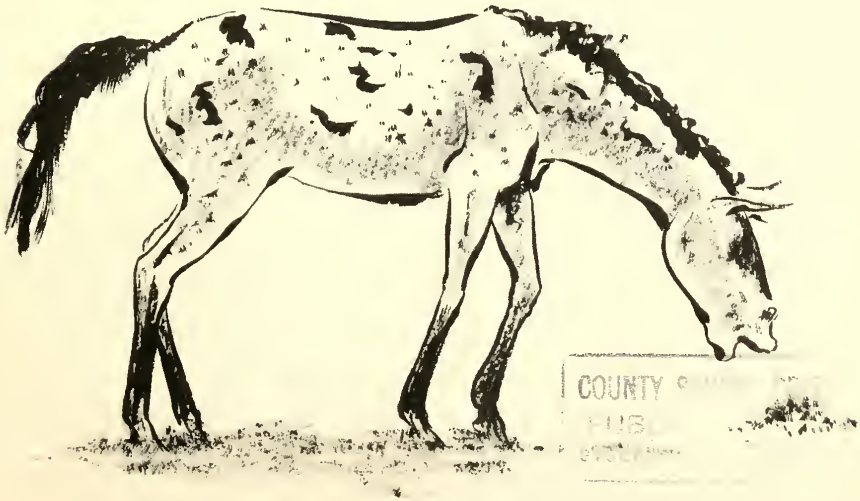
Gradually the colt lost some of his fear, and after a time he would come up within a few feet and eat the spilled oats greedily. But before he got so he'd let Whitey touch him, the snow was gone and something had to be done about him if Uncle Torwal wasn't to find out.

So one afternoon Whitey brought the oats and a hackamore and caught Old Spot and climbed up on his back. Then he rattled the oats pan and rode slowly off towards the far end of the pasture. He'd remembered a little box canyon over in the far corner that had a small unused corral.

The colt was somewhat puzzled by this business, but by now he had begun to lose his fear of Whitey, and the oats rattling in the pan sounded mighty good, so he followed cautiously along.

When they came to the corral Whitey rode on in to the farther side. Getting down on the ground he stayed quiet except for rattling the oats pan now and then while the colt came up and carefully investigated the corral gate. Seeing that the colt was not minded to come any nearer as long as he was there, Whitey poured out part of the oats on the ground and climbed carefully over the fence and walked away.

At his first move the colt had whirled away, but after a little he ventured back up to the gate and snorted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around until he was convinced that Old Spot was alone inside. After that he walked carefully up to get his share of the oats, and while he was busy with them Whitey moved around and shut the gate.

Then he pushed his second-hand Stetson to the back of his head and looked through the bars of the corral at his new horse. The colt was his now, and he was so full of pride that his chest hurt him considerably. He felt as though he might swell and burst any minute.

Now all he had to do was keep Uncle Torwal from finding out anything until he had the colt gentled and perhaps taught him some tricks. He figured that once he got him trained, Uncle Torwal would see what a smart horse he was and wouldn't say anything more about turning him loose.

Whitey stayed around the corral a long time that day, talking softly to the colt and thinking about the stir he'd cause when he went riding into town on his new horse. And folks that had never noticed him to speak of, when he'd ridden Old Spot around, would point him out as being the only fellow in the country who had a blind horse for a Sunday horse.

It took plenty of patience to gentle that wild colt but finally Whitey had him so he would come and eat out of his hand. Then, gradually, the colt lost his fear of the boy and would let himself be curried all over, have his feet picked up, and would even lead. Next, Whitey taught him to come to his whistle.

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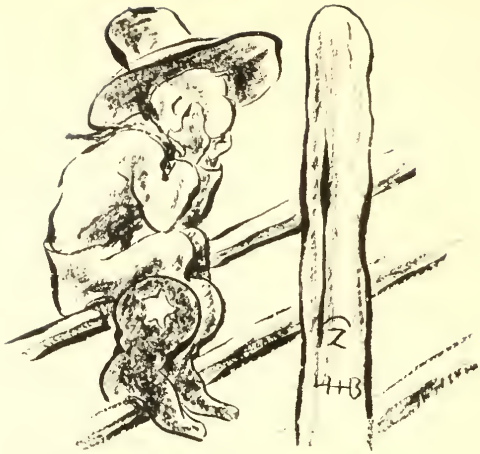
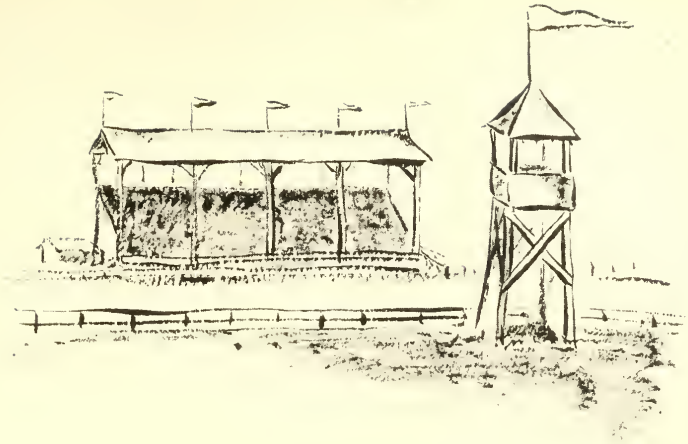


One afternoon Whitey was sitting on top of the old corral fence thinking how lucky he was that Uncle Torwal hadn't found out what he was doing.

He was just in the middle of deciding that he'd show the blind colt at the county fair in the fall, and was all wrapped up in listening to the crowds in the grandstand hollering with excitement at seeing the blind colt jump through a flaming hoop, when he was interrupted by Uncle Torwal's voice below him.

"What's that little 'Crow-bait' doing here, Bub?"

Whitey nearly fell off the fence, he was so surprised. Uncle Torwal had ridden up from the other side, and Whitey had been so busy with his county fair imaginings that he hadn't heard him.



"Oh, he's just grazing with Old Spot," Whitey said after he had pulled himself together. "Isn't he a purty scamp, though?"

Uncle Torwal got off his horse and climbed up on the fence beside Whitey before he answered. Then he took his jack-knife out of his pocket and settled down to whittling as if he were going to spend the afternoon horse trading or something.

"He is a right likely looking piece of horseflesh, for a fact," he said after a while. "Too bad he's blind."

"You bet he's purty!" Whitey said, and he wondered what he should say next. He knew that the time had come for a showdown, but he also knew that Uncle Torwal had his horse-trading humor on and that there

was no use coming straight out and asking him anything. So he decided to horse trade too, and he took out his jack-knife and waited for Uncle Torwal to make the next move.

"Him and Old Spot act like they was old friends. Kinda looks like the colt musta been in here some time," Torwal said after a while.

"Yessir, it does kinda look that way for a fact," Whitey agreed, and whittled busily.

"Wouldn't be surprised if maybe he drifted in during the blizzard," Uncle Torwal went on after a time.

Whitey knew that all this had nothing to do with whether he could keep the colt or not. Uncle Torwal was just playing cat and mouse with him and he'd have a lot better chance of keeping the colt if he could keep on acting like a horse trader. So he tipped his old hat further back on his head and whittled some more.

"Yessir, that's probably just about what happened," Whitey said, as if he weren't worried at all.

"Now that he's made up to Old Spot the way he has, it's kinda too bad we gotta shag him out on the range again," Uncle Torwal said.

"Yeah, it does seem kinda too bad," said Whitey.

"Of course, if he was gentle and knowed anything, it'd be different," Torwal went on. "But you take a critter raised wild like he was, and being blind too, I doubt that a feller would ever be able to do anything with him."

"But you figure that if he could be gentled, he might make a good Sunday horse?" Whitey asked, grinning to himself.

"Well, I dunno," Torwal said. "But when I was a kid I had a blind saddle mare and she was a dandy. Sure-footed as a goat, she was. But she was extra smart," he added.

"This colt is mighty smart, just like I always said!" Whitey exclaimed.

"Well, he did manage not to get wolf et," Torwal agreed. "But that was probably just luck. It doesn't mean he could learn anything else."

Whitey saw that now was the time to get busy if he wanted to keep the colt. So he slid down off the fence.

"Watch this, Uncle Torwal," he said and whistled shrilly.

The colt stopped grazing and came trotting up. When he got close he smelled Torwal and snorted and stopped. Whitey called him and the colt came on, keeping his ears pointed at Torwal, however, and snorting a little.

Whitey fed the colt a handful of oats and put the hackamore on him and rubbed his hands all over him and picked up his feet, one by one, to show that he was gentle. He'd seen horse traders do that. Then Whitey called Confusion and the dog came running and jumped up on the blind colt's back.

"How do you like this, Uncle Torwal?" Whitey asked as he led the colt up with Confusion still on his back.

"Well, now!" Torwal exclaimed. "Don't know as I've ever seen anything like it, before."

"Oh, he's a smart feller all right," Whitey said, grinning fit to split his face.

"Hmm," Torwal said, cautiously. "Can he do anything else?"

Whitey had hoped Uncle Torwal would ask that, because he had spent a lot of time teaching the colt a special trick.

He turned to the colt. "Do you think you could learn to be a fancy saddle horse?" he asked him, and scratched him lightly between the forelegs. The colt nodded his head up and down.

"You're never going to be any trouble to anybody, are you?" he asked him again, and at the same time he scratched the colt's shoulder. The colt nodded his head sidewise.

"See that, Uncle Torwal!" Whitey said. "He can even talk!"

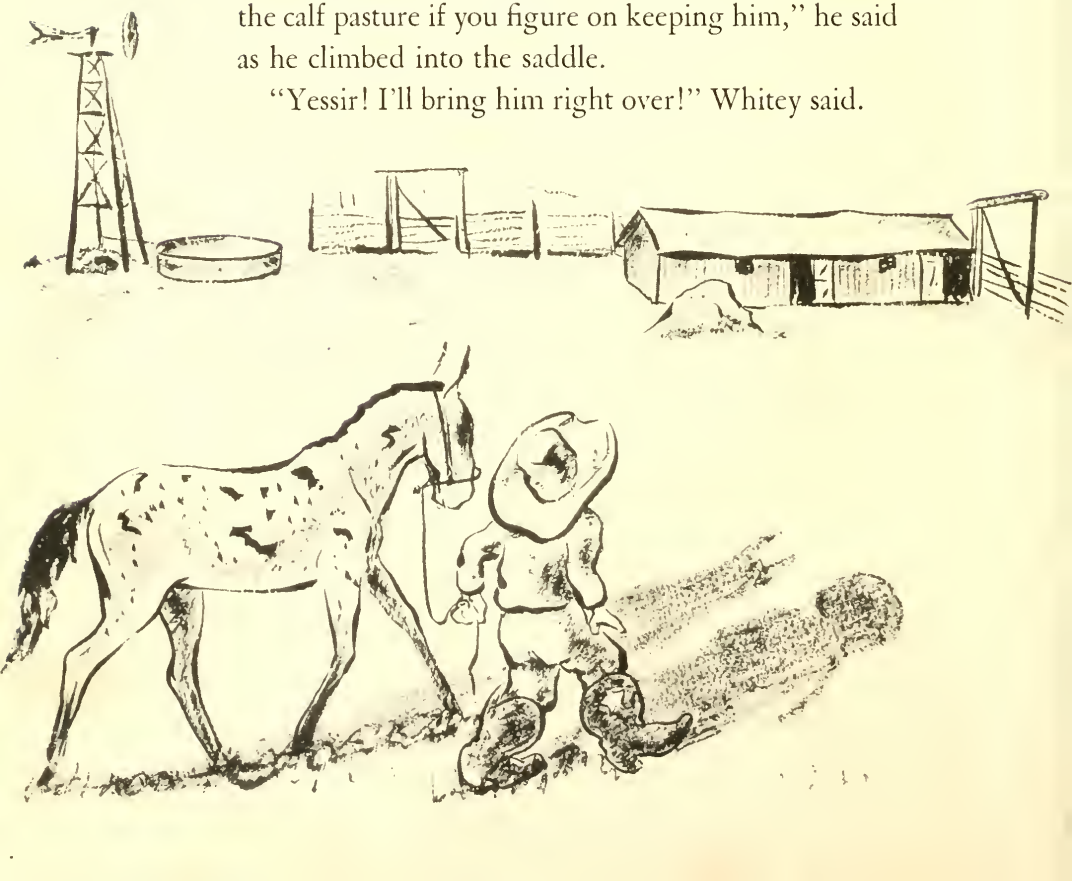
Torwal grinned. "Reckon he's smarter than I figured!"

"Yessir!" said Whitey. "And he'll learn to do a lot of other things, too!"

Uncle Torwal climbed down off the fence and walked over to his horse.

"Well, you better bring him home and put him in the calf pasture if you figure on keeping him," he said as he climbed into the saddle.

"Yessir! I'll bring him right over!" Whitey said.



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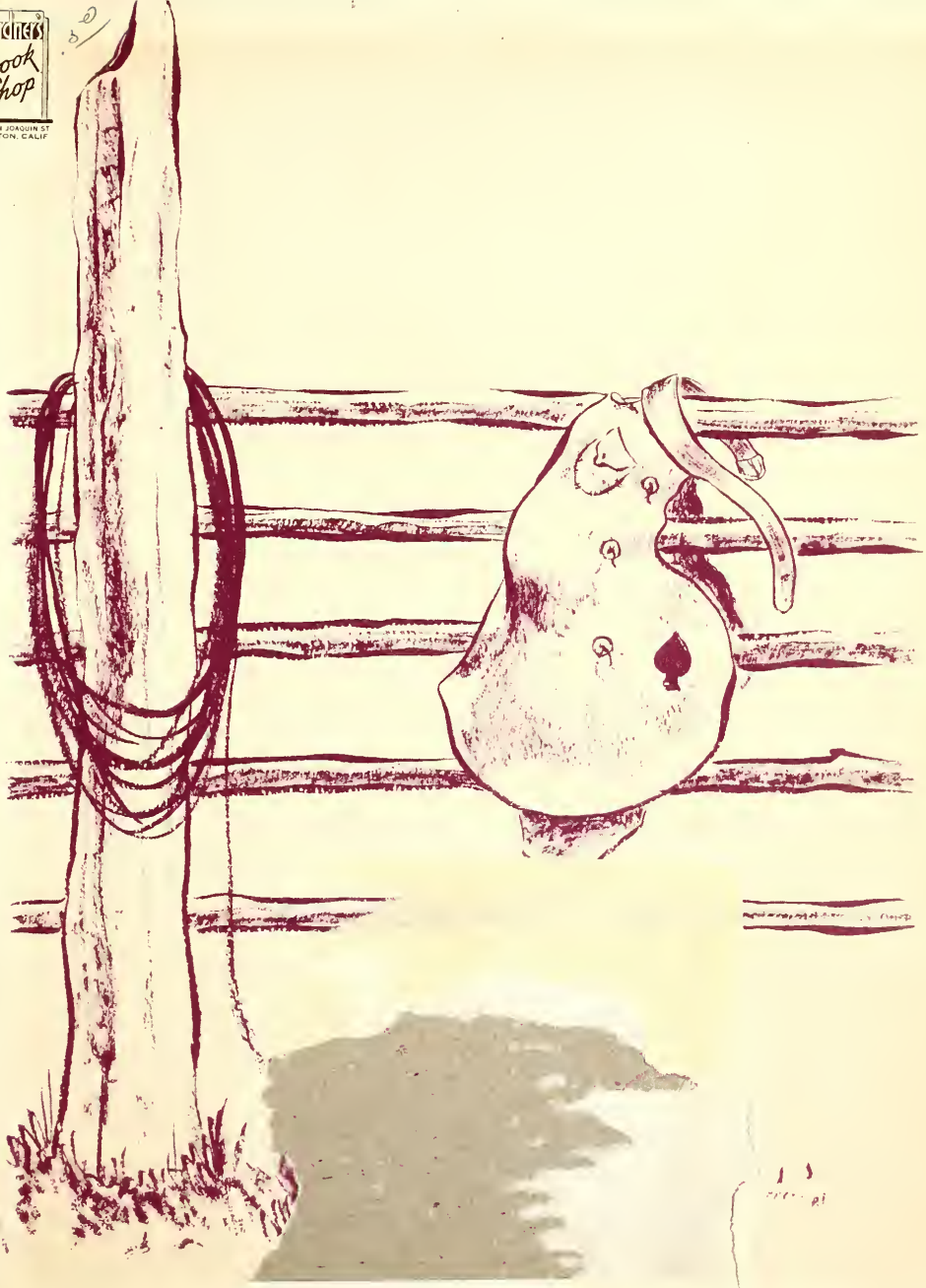

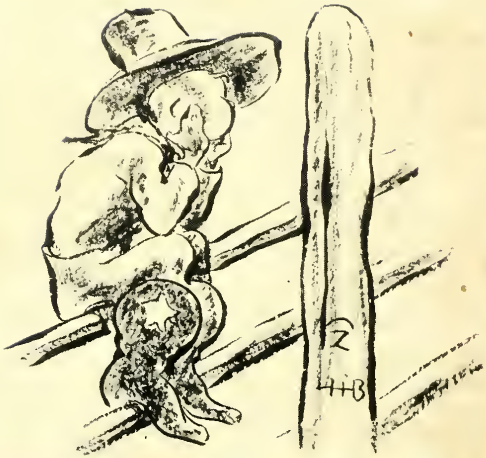

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